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# SIDEWALK CRISIS

## Current State of Philippine Sidewalks and Solutions Towards a Pedestrian-Friendly Society

tapa project

*Sidewalk Crisis: An Analysis on the Conditions of Modern Philippine Sidewalks and Steps Towards a Pedestrian-Friendly Society, First Edition, July 2025*

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*Sidewalk Crisis:*
*An Analysis on the Conditions of Modern Philippine Sidewalks and Steps Towards a Pedestrian-Friendly Society*

*TAPA PROJECT*
*2025*

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# INTRODUCTION

Walking in the Philippines is a challenge itself. Living in a developing country such as the Philippines is already a big challenge in itself, yet in a country that prioritizes the welfare of fast-moving, roving automobiles, you don't have to go that far outside the confines of your home to see the conditions of our pedestrian infrastructure currently in place.

Walking on sidewalks in the Philippines can be similar to playing *Paperboy* (the old retro arcade game) in real life, where you have to dodge obstacles and various hazards just to arrive at your destination.

Stepping on Philippine sidewalks can be a slow, painful upward climb and experience where you, the pedestrian, have to adjust to the whims of external factors that are beyond your control.

Many forces are out to get you, a random crack on the sidewalk, a neighbor's car or property occupying the sidewalk, or an angry dog waiting to pounce on you. Indeed, some can be life-threatening or result in bodily injury - just like in *Paperboy*.

In this book, we will delve into what sidewalks are, their role in shaping society created by humanity, as well as their importance in our day to day lives. Of course, in a Philippine-context, the book will also walk through the current conditions of Philippine sidewalks by a) identifying the issues that currently plagues it and b) analyze what caused it and identify any effects not only on society but on pedestrians as well.

This book will also provide tried and tested steps and solutions for its intended target readers to try out by citing various case studies that led to an area's embrace of pedestrian welfare and development. There is an unaddressed gap and need to centralize and document issues that are plaguing Philippine sidewalks today, as well as reveal the steps and solutions that various institutions used in maintaining pedestrian-friendly societies that policymakers such as mayors, barangay captains and community leaders can use in improving the sidewalk situation throughout the Philippines.

All in all, the author wishes that this book instills a sense of understanding, raise awareness as well as inform the stakeholders of the current conditions of Philippine sidewalks, emphasize the challenges that these current conditions will provide and provide effective solutions in order to create a society that prioritizes the welfare of its pedestrians by providing high-quality, properly planned

and maintained sidewalks that could rival some of the world's greatest cities. In the end, sidewalks are not a luxury, but are a public commodity that should be available to everyone, regardless of social class and socio-economic status, the implications of which would be further discussed in the succeeding chapters.

## Part One: What are Sidewalks?

# CHAPTER ONE

# DEFINITION AND ROLE OF SIDEWALKS

By definition, sidewalks are physical spaces dedicated to the transportation of pedestrians by foot. Sidewalks serve as conduits for pedestrian movement and access. Typically, sidewalks are separated or at least should be, from the road by means of a curb or a buffer space for safety. Sidewalks are also a type of walkway, which is a space or pathway defined for use to be utilized by a person on foot or wheelchair. Walkways may also

come in various forms, such as paths, pedestrian walkways, and roadway shoulders.

Furthermore, the main purpose of sidewalks is to facilitate the movement of pedestrians from one place to another by making sure that pedestrians are safe and comfortable with walking on the space that is the sidewalk. In essence, a fully functional and proper sidewalk must have direct and connected networks of walking routes to a pedestrian's desired destination without gaps or abruptions. Indeed, the role of sidewalks in modern society are considered vital when it comes to enhancing connectivity and promoting walking among the general population.

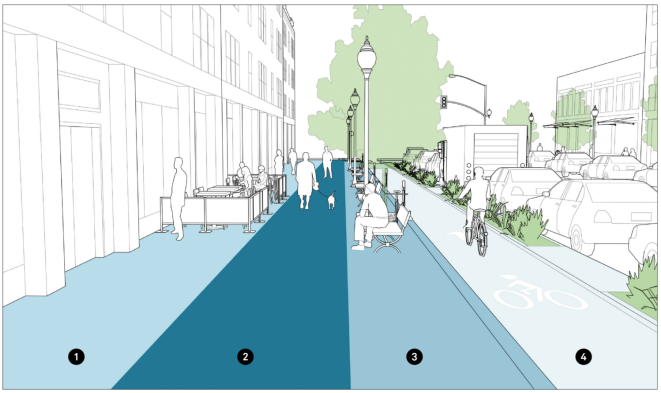
Sidewalks are usually recommended to be built beside low-speed, low-volume roadways, especially on roadways where pedestrian activity is likely to occur. Another main purpose of sidewalks is to provide short distance travel to pedestrians towards

pedestrian-generating development, primarily neighborhoods, schools and businesses. This makes sidewalks a desirable commodity to ensure pedestrian safety and comfort in areas with mixed land uses, and areas where there are high traffic volumes, making the transportation of pedestrians possible as a result.

The creation of sidewalks also often involve a variety of construction materials such as concrete. However, there were also documented cases where asphalt, crushed stones and other stabilizing surfaces were used to construct sidewalks (and also to save construction costs). These materials ensure that a sidewalk remains accessible and properly maintained at regular intervals.

Sidewalks come in all shapes and sizes, but they usually conform to a specific guideline in order to serve multiple functions.

As such, a typical proper sidewalk should be designed with four distinct zones to accommodate multiple functions and uses.




*What an ideal sidewalk should contain.*
*Image courtesy: Global Designing Cities Initiative*

**Frontage Zone.** This section defines the function of the sidewalk as an extension of a building or property. This usually comes in the form of entryways, doors or outdoor establishments. The frontage zone consists of the facade of buildings and establishments that is facing the street and the space adjacent to the building. And the frontage zone also serves as a space adjacent to a property line that provides space for people to enter and exit buildings and properties.

**Clear Path/Pedestrian Through Zone.** The clear path or pedestrian through zone is the primary, dedicated and

accessible space that runs parallel to the street. Its main function is to channel pedestrian activity, ensure the safety and comfort of walking pedestrians as well as being perfectly able to accommodate heavy pedestrian traffic in downtown and commercial districts. It should have a clear width enough to facilitate the transport of heavy volumes of foot traffic when necessary.

**Street Furniture/Furnishing Zone.** This zone is a space dedicated to containing street furniture as well as pedestrian amenities (street lights, benches, utility poles, transit facilities, waste disposals, tree pits and cycle parkings) are provided for the convenience of the pedestrians. Other amenities such as signages and mailboxes may also appear. This zone may also contain green space dedicated to the growth and implementation of flora such as shrubbery and trees, which may act as an absorbent to prevent rainwater from hitting pedestrians. As such, this zone is usually dedicated to enhancing comfort and aesthetics.

**Buffer Zone.** Some may or may not feature buffer zones on sidewalks, depending on the size and its planned uses. The

buffer zone comes in a variety of forms: curb extensions, parklets, drainage, vehicle parking, etc. Despite its different functions a buffer zone still aims to provide safety to pedestrians from the moving vehicles on the roadway or street.

Despite the sidewalk being created for a particular use: to facilitate the transportation of pedestrians to their desired destinations, a sidewalk can also be used for a variety of things. The additional roles and functions of a sidewalk makes it a public commodity that should be available and accessible to everyone. Indeed, sidewalks are usually seen as a fundamental part of urban, suburban and rural life where foot traffic and pedestrian movement are active, including being a necessary investment for cities and communities when it comes to enhancing pedestrian movement, health and social capital.

But how did sidewalks come to be? Were sidewalks always a recurring and consistent feature in our cities? In the next chapter, have a brief walkthrough to the past as you analyze how sidewalks were created and where it first originated.

By learning its history, you can obtain a proper understanding on how sidewalks developed significantly equally with the development of human civilization and urban life.

# CHAPTER TWO

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF SIDEWALKS

Like many things in history, sidewalks also have a long fascinating history which stemmed from the needs similar to modern pedestrians today. Many overlook the historical significance of sidewalks and may assume that sidewalks are a uniquely modern invention. But archeological evidence yields that sidewalks might've been invented as far back as humanity's earliest cities. As such, sidewalks can be viewed as an underrated invention - so let's take a step and examine the history of sidewalks

and examine how sidewalks have evolved over the course of human history.

***Ancient Times - Middle Ages***

Archeologists found evidence that sidewalks existed as far back as 4,000 years ago in ancient Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq) where the world's first and most ancient cities were built. During King Nebuchadnezzar's reign, there were records in Babylon that the sidewalks were built in a primitive fashion as elevated stone pathways made out of limestone and breccia slabs. Historians also found considerable evidence that sidewalks also originated in Anatolia (in what was now modern day Turkey) dating far back as 2000 B.C.E.

Similarly, the Greeks and Romans also emulated the primitive form of sidewalks, especially the ancient Romans, whose priority over their empire was the creation of roads that led back to Rome, facilitating the creation of raised walkways called *sēmitae*. This ancient

pedestrian infrastructure was created to separate pedestrians from wheeled traffic, especially in a time where large domesticated mammals such as horses and oxen were used for the transportation of people and goods throughout civilization at the time. However, things will turn for the worst in the succeeding centuries following the collapse of the Roman Empire in the 5th century A.D.

***Middle Ages - Early Modern Period***

As Rome had lost its grip on all facets of civilian and government life, roads including sidewalks had lost their significance as urban planning in Europe became less structured and organized. As a result, narrow footpaths usually used by pedestrians to travel to their desired destinations also became spaces for wheeled wagons to drive on, completely erasing the separation between the two. The creation of sidewalks were also further hampered by the creation of narrow streets throughout

medieval Europe, which made the creation of walkways almost impossible and also posed a major risk to the health and safety of urban inhabitants at the time.

By the arrival of the 17th century, major European cities began to re-introduce sidewalks following the catastrophe that was the Great Fire of London in 1666. The event called for a proper redesign and reconstruction of the city of London due to its narrow streets and roads, making it a major risk for public disasters. New laws were passed in 1671 which required the construction of properly paved roads and streets with accompanying footpaths for pedestrians.

***Early Modern Period - 20th Century***

Prior to the 19th century, urban inhabitants and pedestrians took great risk in walking throughout towns and cities as they traversed city streets and roads alongside horse-drawn carriages, carts, wagons, animals and other forms of primitive transportation. Additionally,

due to the lack of urban hygiene programs at the time, pedestrians had to walk through mud or excrement, which posed a major health hazard at the time. The current reiteration of the modern sidewalk stemmed from this period of great need for urban rehabilitation when in the mid-1800's, Paris became the forefront of urban renewal under the rehabilitation efforts of Georges-Eugene Haussmann, who spearheaded the rebuilding of Paris during the 1850s and 1860s.

Haussmann initiated the effort to include sidewalks as a consistent feature along Paris's wide, sweeping and lush boulevards, perfectly balancing function and urban aesthetics. In addition, the wide-scale revival of sidewalks due to Hausmann's beautification of Paris emerged as the catalyst to feature sprawling sidewalks as an integral part of urban life. The re-introduction of sidewalks throughout urban Paris stemmed from a major concern over public health and

safety. The city authorities opined that "*by separating the flow of people from the movement of vehicular traffic, sidewalks contributed to the ordering and cleansing of the city.*" As such, the reintroduction and rehabilitation of sidewalks during the 19th-century became a symbol of hygiene and morality among many Europeans.

Hausmann's ideas soon spread throughout the Western world, his ideas for grandiose and wide-scale urban planning principles became huge influences to urban planners in Vienna, Barcelona and as far as the United States.

Across the pond, the United States and its cities experienced further urban rehabilitation and sidewalk improvements during the 1920s, where cracked and pot-holed sidewalks constructed during the past century were covered with smooth concrete appropriate for the rise of the automobile after it was adopted for widespread use during the 1910s. This was also in response to

improving the durability of sidewalks and ease of maintenance. By the 1940s and the post-war period following the Second World War, many cities across the United States, particularly New York City embraced innovations in sidewalk designs by incorporating accessibility features for easy transport of disabled individuals. And today, sidewalks still require constant maintenance and repairs in order to function properly.

By the late 19th-century, paved sidewalks became a common feature among urban cities, transforming city streets into spaces of leisure, permanently transforming how people experience city life. However, under those solid concrete surfaces lies thousands of stories worth telling - stories of humanity's triumphs and challenges as they strive for development and improvement not only in their lives, but for the sake of humanitarian and urban progress as well.

Sidewalks, despite their unassuming nature are an important part of human history and urban development in general, and despite their evolution over time, they still have the same purpose, which makes sidewalks truly an ingenious and timeless invention of human engineering and sophistication.

***Evolution of Sidewalks In the Philippines***

The origins of sidewalks throughout the Philippines can be traced back to the Spanish colonization period when major European cities such as Paris and London started to implement sidewalks. In response, many cities throughout the 19th-century world followed suit, including Manila.

The Governor-General at the time, Narciso Claveria, had the first sidewalks built throughout the city on October 25, 1845. Indeed, Philippine towns and cities during the Spanish colonization period featured only uniformed town and city designs through the appearance

of a grid layout, a common appearance of Philippine towns and cities at the time which was deemed not aesthetically pleasing but were necessarily functional when it comes to the transport of troops in case of a revolt.

Manila at the turn of the century was faced with a myriad of urban problems ranging from overcrowding, increased crime and physical deterioration of many of its infrastructure. It was the arrival of the Americans in the tail-end of the 1800's that stabilized the conditions of Manila's already-dilapidated sidewalks.

The Americans brought with them much needed rehabilitation of the Philippines's urban centers. Utilizing a modern approach in planning and maintaining towns and cities, the American government implemented zoning laws, organized proper water, sewerage and transport cities to enhance functionality in cities and towns.

Due to the urbanization efforts of the Americans during this period, both the municipal and city

governments as well as the general public at the time became ardent and proper followers of city rules in order to maintain cleanliness and order which especially defined Manila during the early 20th-century. As a result, Manila during the American occupation period was far ahead of any city in Southeast Asia when it comes to aesthetics, urban planning and urban infrastructure.

However, all of this progress would be downturned by the arrival of the Second World War in Asia in December 1941.

Many of the country's urban centers, including Manila, were in shambles. Being the model city of its time, Manila suffered only next to Warsaw when it came to wartime destruction. The post-war period never rivaled the prosperity, glamour and quality of automobile and pedestrian infrastructure of the pre-war period under the Americans.

Many city streets remained damaged and unpaved. On the suburbs, where roads were usually unpaved and still made of dirt, turned into mud in typhoon seasons, making movement and the transport of goods and people incredibly difficult. There was also a lack of sewerage systems to cover the open drains which could lead to the spread of diseases, and even worse, sidewalks were unheard of at the time.

Eventually, as more people moved to the cities to find a living, sidewalks soon became an essential part of Philippine urban life. But not in a way that others expect. Throughout the next few decades, even through the 21st-century, sidewalks are mandated by law, code or ordinances to be built on every town, municipality or city by the national or local government.

However, they exist in the Philippines not to facilitate the transport of foot traffic of pedestrians, but to be occupied by countless vendors and flea shops, to be

used as parking spaces, barangay outposts, space for informal housing, rampant utility poles and signages. From its inception during the 19th-century, to its aesthetic and functional peak during the first few decades of the 20th-century under American rule, the evolution (or in this case, *devolution*) of sidewalks was the fault of the political institutions after the war, especially when it comes to the deterioration and the lack of rehabilitation of the country's infrastructure making it a generational problem which still affects Filipinos to this day, culminating in an apathetic attitude towards pedestrian infrastructure and an unhealthy reliance on vehicle transport.

***Future of Infastructure Development in the Philippines***

The history of Philippine sidewalks coincides with the development of urban planning in the Philippines in general - with how it was brought from Europe by the Spaniards. There is a consistent theme that can be found

throughout the history of both aspects of Philippine urban history: the lack of initiative from Filipinos themselves to improve the quality of life through rigorous planning, creation and maintaining valuable infrastructure, whether it be sidewalks or roads.

Since the Philippines is located in the Ring of Fire, as well as located in the middle of the typhoon belt in the Western Pacific, the country is extremely vulnerable to the onslaught of powerful typhoons and disastrous earthquakes. There must be a strong emphasis when it comes to the creation of stronger pedestrian infrastructure development to not only save lives, but to reduce traffic and pollution as well.

# CHAPTER THREE

# IMPORTANCE OF SIDEWALKS

Sidewalks are more than avenues of walkability. As public commodities, sidewalks are naturally flexible and provide nothing but good benefits to the community and to the pedestrians using it. Sidewalks are versatile human inventions not only designed to encourage humans to walk, but also affect other aspects that we've always taken for granted. Walkable communities are observed to have more benefits to society than those who are dependent on automobiles for transport.

Furthermore, sidewalks and walkways provide people the proper space to travel within the dedicated right of way for pedestrians. The best example of which is social mobility; sidewalks are vital for social mobility, especially that it can also be a place for children to walk, run, play and ride on.

This further poses a question - *why* are sidewalks so important and crucial to modern society? And what aspects of society benefit from their importance?

***Safety and Welfare***

Sidewalks can act as safety barriers between the pedestrian and busy roads. Of course, it was proven that sidewalks reduce the chance of traffic accidents, especially pedestrian collisions with automobiles and other motor vehicles. According to a study by the UNC Highway Safety Research Center, the chance of a sidewalk becoming a crash site for traffic related incidents is 88.2 percent lower than crash sites without a sidewalk.

Significantly, sidewalks should especially be present in areas that contain places such as schools, parks and public transportation destinations since they provide significant protection to women and children. Furthermore, sidewalks were proven to be one of the most effective engineering measures in conditioning residents to walk to their destinations. As a result, sidewalks act as a safe space for walking , which dramatically improves pedestrian safety.

There is also the fact that sidewalks were observed to make pedestrians feel safe when leaving their vehicle or when walking to their destination. As a public infrastructure, properly maintained sidewalks can also prevent non-traffic accidents such as trips and falls. Additionally, safe and accessible sidewalks ensure that everyone, from children, adults, elderly and people with disabilities can navigate and arrive at their destination comfortably and safely.

***Health and Environment***

Another crucial significance of sidewalks that is grossly underrated and taken for granted is its health benefits to one's physical and mental state. Sidewalks promote and encourage people to walk more, leading to healthier lifestyles and reduced dependence on vehicles. This benefits both health and reduces the environmental impact of emissions coming from motor vehicles everyday.

Indeed, studies showed that sidewalks that improve the walkability of an area or community reduce the risk of mental health problems (i.e, depression). The same study also concluded that walking on sidewalks significantly decreases the risk of physical health problems such as obesity and high blood pressure. There were also findings that walking on sidewalks also reduces the chances of cardiovascular diseases from happening, as well as helping pedestrians achieve better concentration.

***Economy and Development***

Strategically built sidewalks are usually deemed as economically beneficial for neighborhoods, businesses and communities since they carry so much accessible foot traffic. Walking on sidewalks improves community interaction since people are more likely to shop in local stores. Sidewalks can also contain social spaces for the community in the form of commercial establishments such as market stalls and cafes, as long as they follow certain guidelines in order to avoid obstructing the sidewalk completely.

Of course, walkable communities and cities are also a magnet for tourists as those tourists are more likely to immerse themselves in the life of the community they're visiting in. Places with sidewalks are more likely to be strong economically due to these stimulating economic factors. Additionally, the presence of sidewalks in communities also enhances the property value of the

houses and commercial establishments within the area. Real-estate featuring proper sidewalks boasts premium prices compared to those who do not.

In the end, all of these significance builds-up the importance of sidewalk as a public commodity crucial to the development and function of society as a whole. Sidewalks present a society that is proper, clean and law-abiding. Its presence not only keeps pedestrians safe, but also enhances the standard of living in a community. The importance of sidewalk in society today cannot be underestimated nor should it be taken for granted. Just like any other thing in life, sidewalks deserve proper maintenance and care in order for a sidewalk to remain comfortably functional and aesthetically pleasing to pedestrians. But in the Philippines, the current sidewalk conditions are a whole different matter. Something that many Filipinos don't realize is a pressing issue that needs to be resolved.

## Part Two: Philippine Sidewalks - An Afterthought?

# CHAPTER FOUR

# IDENTIFYING ISSUES PLAGUING PHILIPPINE SIDEWALKS

There are observations that sidewalks in the Philippines do not “exist.” Well, at least in a way that they were supposed to be used for. Indeed, sidewalks in the Philippines are used for everything else except for walking.

Sidewalks are being used for parking and vending purposes, being transformed into spaces for recreational

activities, extensions for private properties such as residential houses and commercial establishments, and at worse, are missing from places where they should be.

This makes sidewalks “non-existent” in the minds of Filipinos simply because Filipinos were never accustomed to walking, seeing or using a proper sidewalk to begin with due to the issues that hinders its function.

As a result, the misuse of sidewalks could be a primary contributor in the deterioration of sidewalk conditions throughout the country in general.

The current conditions of sidewalks in the Philippines in this chapter are to be discussed in a manner that will explain and analyze certain phenomenons that are currently taking place or are contributing to the deterioration of sidewalk conditions throughout the country. Those discussions shall serve as a testament to the reality of the current sidewalk conditions that pedestrians are experiencing, as well as a basis to which

politicians and institutions can start from when identifying the poor conditions of Philippine sidewalks.

***Obstructions***

The primary issue that everyone (such as you, just observe outside) can agree on is that Filipinos love to obstruct sidewalks. Such well-known examples of sidewalk obstructions commonly found anywhere in the Philippines are the over-abundance of street vendors occupying the sidewalks by setting up stalls to sell their goods and merchandise. Of course, this creates exposure for the vendor's products, stimulating economic activity, but still, a great hassle for the pedestrian walking through the narrow space of sidewalk left.

Second common sidewalk obstructions are parked vehicles. Some cars park partially, leaving a bit of space for pedestrians to pass through. But the worst is when a car fully occupies the sidewalk space, forcing pedestrians to

adjust and walk through on the road, making pedestrians extremely vulnerable to traffic accidents.

Another common obstructions are debris, utility poles, security barriers and pieces of tools and equipment that were left behind further hinders pedestrian movement that can be the cause of human traffic and accidents, such as falls or trippings.

***Poor Quality Construction and Maintenance***

In some cases where sidewalks do *exist*, they are either in bad shape or are badly maintained, or just overall poorly made. So, what constitutes a poorly made sidewalk? A poorly made sidewalk is when a sidewalk was constructed so narrowly it barely holds a single human being. Its construction was probably due to a lack of foresight and probably just to comply with existing laws and ordinances. This bare-minimum and often poorly-thought execution could lead to a variety of dangers for pedestrians.

Furthermore, narrow sidewalks, especially in urban areas, does not reflect the population density of an area. As such, a narrow sidewalk cannot accommodate the large amounts of people, which might force people to abandon walking altogether and seek alternative means to get to their destination, contributing further to the disuse of sidewalks. Philippine sidewalks are also uneven and filled with loose rocks and cement, which could lead to physical injuries.

***Extensions for Private Properties***

A unique and more complex type of obstruction is when property owners deliberately occupy a portion of the sidewalk by extending their property over it. Examples include the construction of gates, property walls, slanted driveways as well as the erection of shops and other types of commercial establishments, rendering the sidewalk completely dysfunctional and aesthetically unpleasing, leading to a loss of consistency in the flow of sidewalks.

This is ironic considering sidewalks, while considered public property, are prohibited by law to be claimed by any individual or institution. In the end, the obstruction and deliberate setup of property on a sidewalk is illegal and must be stopped at once.

Indeed, the National Building Code or PD 1096 Section 1101 clearly states that *"no person shall use or occupy a street, alley or public sidewalk."* Sidewalks are indeed, should be beyond the commerce of men, away from man's greed and should only be fully dedicated to the safe transportation of walking pedestrians.

***Prevailing Economic and Social Attitudes***

The prevailing attitude of the Filipino public and lawmakers as well as institutions is that society is run by cars. Literally. The country's road networks and urban areas were designed to prioritize the transportation of automobiles. Furthermore, the social structure also contributes to the deterioration and disuse of sidewalks

due to the over-abundance of gated communities, highlighting the need for more cars not walking as a mode of transportation.

The lack of public spaces such as parks and other green areas, the urban landscape littered with privately-owned malls, as well as poorly designed public transportation systems discourage Filipinos from walking and instead aim to purchase cars, which influences the social attitudes of Filipinos when it comes to walking.

As a result, many Filipinos find conveniences in cars to help transport them from place to place, which is completely understandable. The lack of spaces and public places for civilians to go for are a testament to the contributing understanding that Filipinos believe that luxury is a key to a healthy society.

Overall, a country whose society has poor walkability can be unattractive for tourism and investment, which could alter a country's economic

fortunes in a negative way. The Philippines has, rather unfortunate, not complied with its own rules regarding sidewalks.

The country has also been noted for not investing in quality pedestrian infrastructure. Even in places where sidewalks exist, those sidewalks were noted to be of extremely poor quality, filled with holes and other obstructions. Indeed, all of these boils down to the ignorant attitudes of Filipinos towards sidewalks due to economic and social factors that are difficult to be fixed by mere laws alone.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# HAZARDS AND ACCIDENTS FROM CURRENT SIDEWALK CONDITIONS

The current conditions of Philippine sidewalks not only hinders pedestrians from getting to their desired place, it could also bring them physical, mental or emotional harm that could also be life-threatening when no actions are taken. In the Philippines alone, 5,800 pedestrians were involved in accidents involving sidewalks and other pedestrian walkways, especially in

Metro Manila. Much of these pedestrian victims are students, highlighting the need for stronger safety measures to ensure that each pedestrian is safe when walking on sidewalks.

The identification of common sidewalk hazards and accidents is absolutely crucial in order for policymakers and members of the communities to understand the dangers of the poor conditions of sidewalks (or the lack thereof) throughout the Philippines. By identifying such hazards and accidents, policymakers and community leaders can take immediate measures to prevent and avoid such unfortunate events from inflicting damage to innocent pedestrians.

***Cracked and Broken Sidewalks***

Cracks in the sidewalk pose great danger to pedestrians from all walks of life. In fact, cracked and broken sidewalks are the most common sidewalk hazards. A cracked or broken sidewalk is usually defined by its

noticeable appearance: where a chunk of a portion of a slab or part of a sidewalk breaks or separates from its foundations.

Indeed, cracked and broken sidewalks often stem from foundational problems (with what or how a sidewalk was built) and increases the risk of tripping accidents significantly. Furthermore, cracked and broken sidewalks also take the forms of concrete pitting, flaking and staining, cracked driveways, sinking concrete steps, cracked concrete patio, sinking porch and cracked pool deck. Indeed, cracked and broken sidewalks can also cause uneven sidewalks, which makes walking significantly more challenging and unnecessarily exhausting to pedestrians.

What causes cracks and broken sidewalks, anyways? There are a variety of reasons but the most commons are:

1. Soil Erosion - considered as the primary cause behind cracked sidewalks. Soil erosion occurs when soil underneath is washed away by water, destabilizing the concrete sidewalk on top of the sidewalk.
2. Tree Roots - tree roots that expand beyond the surface of the soil are caused by getting under the sidewalk through exerting pressure below. As a result, a tree root pushes the concrete up, which leads to cracks on the sidewalk surface.
3. Dry Weather - in a tropical country such as the Philippines, dry weather can cause the soil to dry and become brittle. As a result, the soil where the concrete is attached becomes weak, causing the concrete to sink, leading to broken sidewalks and cracks.
4. Incorrect Installation - improper procedures, hastily construction process and lack of

supervision causes a sidewalk to have unstable foundation during its construction.

***Rainwater and Puddles***

Wet sidewalks from rainwater or from residential uses can pose a threat to pedestrians. Sidewalks covered in water can become extremely slippery and increase the risks of slips and falls.

Furthermore, when water is left on sidewalks without evaporating, it becomes stagnant, becoming a major health hazard not only to pedestrians but to residents living nearby within the community. Stagnant water on sidewalks can cause tropical diseases in the Philippines such as dengue, skin rashes and wound infections, potentially endangering the overall welfare of the community if sidewalks are left exposed to stagnant water.

***Inadequate Steet Lighting***

Lack of proper lighting on sidewalks can make it difficult for pedestrians and motorists to see potential hazards, such as crashes, obstructions and other issues plaguing the sidewalk.

The poor visibility caused by inadequate lighting can also expose pedestrians to the dangers of crime, especially at night. Pedestrians might get mugged, killed or assaulted by criminals due to the lack of security features such as proper lighting on sidewalks. This inadequacy can make life in urban areas extremely difficult and can be a primary reason for an increase in crime and other acts of wrong-doings.

***Obstructions Forcing Pedestrians to Walk on the Road***

Sidewalks littered with unnecessary obstructions such as over-abundance of parked cars, established vendors, extensions of private properties and the placement of private items on the sidewalk can force

pedestrians to walk around the obstruction by using the road, making them vulnerable to traffic accidents, such as getting hit by a passing car.

An unsuspecting pedestrian can also experience other accidents such as falls and trips if the items obstructing the sidewalks are small.

These challenges and hazards definitely hinders the proper use of sidewalks. As such, these hazards and accidents highlight the need for the proper creation and maintenance of sidewalks as much as possible. If there is an underlying pattern beneath these hazards and accidents, all of them certainly pose a threat to the community's overall welfare and might contribute to a deterioration on the quality of life of a society if left unaddressed.

These problems are certainly not unique in a Philippine-setting. Other developing countries are also suffering from the same dilemma, as well as first-world

countries leaning on car-centrism such as the United States suffers from poor quality sidewalks due to a society that is over-reliant on cars.

And if ever an accident occurs while you're walking on a sidewalk, you are entitled to sue anyone or any institution who were hindering your ability to walk on a proper sidewalk. This is called a personal injury claim. You must gather enough evidence of the other party's negligence of not maintaining a proper sidewalk. Indeed, the local government has the responsibility to ensure your safety since sidewalks are public property.

Indeed, the issues mentioned definitely pose a hazard to pedestrians. By identifying them properly before committing to any actions, identifying sidewalk issues can and will help policymakers, community leaders and the rest of the general public know how to resolve and address such issues.

In the next part, the book will walk you through potential steps and solutions to avoid unnecessary hazards and accidents from ever occurring on your community's sidewalks.

## Part Three: Towards a Pedestrian-Friendly Society

# CHAPTER SIX

# STEPS AND SOLUTIONS

This chapter will discuss and explain effective steps and solutions for policymakers, community leaders and the general public to learn from and hopefully, implement it in their own communities. A proper sidewalk is an investment that ensures not only the welfare of pedestrians but growth of society economically, socially and politically as well.

The steps and solutions mentioned are directed from the sidewalk issues in the Philippines that were

mentioned in the previous chapter. As such, these methods are obviously deemed effective and are proven and tested by other countries throughout the developed world.

***Proper Planning and Construction***

Sidewalk planning and construction requires the institutions in charge of construction to consider and follow the eight principles of sidewalks: proper sizing, universal accessibility, safe connections, clear signages, attractive spaces, security, quality surfaces and efficient drainage.

This enhances the quality of sidewalks even during the planning stages, ensuring that the construction of sidewalks in a community prioritizes pedestrian use and safety.

During the construction phase of a sidewalk, local authorities must also consider selecting the right materials to use when constructing sidewalks. The most

popular options include concrete, pavers, and stone. In fact, choosing the right material to create sidewalks affects the durability, maintenance, and overall aesthetic quality of the sidewalk.

***Regular Maintenance and Repairs***

Of course, even with the best, high quality materials and strict construction guidelines, no sidewalk can remain perfectly intact and functional without going under regular maintenance and repairs. Of course, when you hear of regular sidewalk maintenance and repairs, you immediately think of sweeping the sidewalk regularly, sealing the sidewalk with sealant to protect the sidewalk from cracks, which can prolong a sidewalk's life. Furthermore, initiating prompt repairs regularly ensures that further sidewalk deterioration can be prevented.

Naturally, these steps are absolutely effective in maintaining a clean and healthy sidewalk. But in the Philippines, where obstructions are the most common

sidewalk issue, a much more forceful approach must be considered.

That forceful approach comes in the form of clearing operations. Clearing operations refers to the act of removing or clearing obstructions or encroachments out of a public way such as roads and sidewalks. Indeed, this is the most effective method of sidewalk maintenance in major Philippine cities, especially throughout Metro Manila.

Usually initiated and supervised by local government authorities, clearing operations may be coordinated with barangays and other smaller administrative units. People who are caught during clearing operations through obstructing or encroaching sidewalks, which are public property, can be given a warning or be fined for violating laws or ordinances aimed to protect sidewalk and pedestrian integrity and safety.

***Stronger Implementation of Laws and Ordinances***

The Philippines provides no legitimate and centralized legal framework in creating the provisions for a nationalized sidewalk system throughout the country. Although there have been attempts over the years to create a centralized legislation regarding sidewalk welfare, such as Senate Bill No. 999, authored by former Senator Manny Villar during the Fourteenth Congress. The bill called for immediate action when it comes to all kinds of sidewalk obstructions, effectively allowing local government units to fully regulate sidewalks without going through a lengthy legal process to regulate and maintain sidewalks. The bill also emphasized the safety of pedestrians, citing that any accidents are liable to the proposed bill.

Unfortunately, despite the Senator's best efforts, the bill never passed into law.

However, a common occurrence in Philippine towns and cities is that local government units are allowed to enact ordinances or measures to craft policies themselves, which effectively gives local government authorities the necessary power to enact legislations that fits the geographical, political, social and economical needs of their jurisdictions.

In an opposing view, this might make sidewalks between cities inconsistent. Cities with more resources can develop more infrastructure than cities and municipalities with limited expenditure, further highlighting an unaddressed problem of wealth discrepancy.

Property owners who deliberately encroach and obstruct the sidewalk should return the sidewalk for public use, with a promise not to encroach on sidewalks ever again. If a property owner repeats this crime over and over, hefty punishment such as fines and

imprisonment must be considered in order to set up an example. Indeed, the funds collected from fines can be used for programs that can further improve pedestrian infrastructure.

With a centralized law that mandates all administrative units to follow a standardized process of creating and regulating sidewalks, it is possible to conclude that it will make the implementation of laws and regulations more stronger than the current system of administration. Stronger implementation of the law regarding sidewalks could deter soon to be offenders, prevent offenders from repeating and maintain peace and order in Philippine society.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# A CALL TO ACTION FOR STAKEHOLDERS

To recap, sidewalks are a vital component of a modern society. They help pedestrians reach their destination safely, while giving the community an appearance of a peaceful and orderly society.

Sidewalks are beneficial to society, they help improve the standard of living of everyone - health, welfare, safety and economics - sidewalks are a natural investment that enhances all aspects of urban and

suburban life that should be properly created and maintained.

But due to how things were in the Philippines, the lack of proper pedestrian infrastructure highlights the backwardness of the Philippines, which might hurt the country in the long run. The car-centric culture that has been long ingrained in Philippine society has shaped many generations of Filipinos to see walking as an inefficient activity, contributing further to the disusage and low opinions of Filipinos about sidewalks in general.

Furthermore, the lack of initiatives and legislation that standardizes sidewalk creation, regulation and maintenance meant that sidewalks and pedestrians are literally on the mercy of the local government, meaning that it is the local government who can decide whether or not to create proper sidewalks, maintain and regulate it or improve overall pedestrian infrastructure, With the current state of Philippine politics and society in general,

sidewalks are still a minor issue to many, except for the urban savvy.

With the sad, sorry state of Philippine sidewalks, the current sidewalk condition of today can be a great opportunity for local government authorities to expand their programs and be connected with their constituents. The creation, regulation and maintenance of proper sidewalks, if done correctly, can have positively beneficial advantages to the Philippines in the foreseeable future.

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# THE FIRST OF ITS KIND!

*In this First Edition of a groundbreaking treatise focused solely on Philippine sidewalks, have a walk through the colorful past of sidewalks and how it came into the Philippines. This book will also re-assess the importance and role of sidewalks in the development of modern societies.*

*In this critical analysis of the Philippine sidewalk conditions, identify the major issues surrounding Philippine sidewalks that hinders pedestrian movements, uncover the potential hazards and dangers that they might inflict, as well as discover effective steps and solutions for policymakers, planners and community leaders might embark upon to improve the current sidewalk situation.*

*Protect and preserve the integrity of sidewalks, make them a vital part of our society - **NOW**.*

*The lack of public spaces such as parks and other green areas, the urban landscape littered with privately-owned malls, as well as poorly designed public transportation systems discourage Filipinos from walking and instead aim to purchase cars, which influences the social attitudes of Filipinos when it comes to walking.*

*There are observations that sidewalks in the Philippines do not "exist." Well, at least in a way that they were supposed to be used for. Indeed, sidewalks in the Philippines are used for everything else except for walking.*

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*TAPA PROJECT is your typical armchair historian, amateur online political analyst, bedroom coder and Dali enthusiast. He currently lives a hermit life inside his messy bedroom in suburban Cavite with five cats. His interests include sidewalk-observing, complaining about spaghetti wires, sending out job applications, coding bad games and writing furiously on his computer about things that interest him at the moment.*

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